United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/1

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 January 2006

Original: English

**Commission on the Status of Women**
**Fiftieth session**
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 (c) (i) of the provisional agenda*
**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work**

## Statement submitted by Associated Country Women of the World, Association for the Study of the World Refugee Problem, Center for Women, the Earth, the Divine, European Union of Women, International Association for Counseling, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of University Women, International Inner Wheel, National Council of German Women's Organizations, Servas International, Socialist International Women, Soroptimist International, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association of Thailand, Salvation Army, Third World Movement against the Exploitation of Women, Women's Federation for World Peace International, Women's International Zionist Organization, and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21666 (E) 060206

## Statement

We, the undersigned international and national non-governmental organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, present to the 50th session of CSW the statement below for information and consideration.

Investing in women and girls makes economic sense, because discrimination leads to lower productivity and higher health costs, results in higher death rates of women, and is a major threat to efforts to reduce poverty.

A lack of contraceptives, family planning support, and reproductive health assistance leads to more than half a million women dying every year from pregnancy-related causes, most of them preventable. This lack of access to contraceptives is one of the primary causes of an estimated 76 million unwanted pregnancies, and 19 million unsafe abortions each year.

HIV/AIDS constitutes the leading cause of death and illness among women aged 15 to 44, and the study, the State of the World Population 2005, estimates that 250 million years of productive life are lost as a result.

Investing in basic education for girls and women helps to promote their health. The ability to read and write improves the quality of their life. Education free from gender bias gives freedom through knowledge and helps to promote human security.

Expanding women's access to and command over income and productive resources contributes to poverty reduction and reduction in child mortality. Women are instrumental in protecting the environment and ensuring effective use of natural resources including water, soil and trees.

Therefore the undersigned

- state that promoting and protecting human rights as well as building democracy are fundamental prerequisites in eradicating poverty;

- note that health services must address sexual and reproductive rights, including programmes to combat and prevent HIV/AIDS which disproportionately affects women and girls; consider access to medication to combat this disease to be a fundamental right and call on national governments and international organisations to introduce measures guaranteeing its availability;

- propose to enact legislation, or implement legislation already enacted, leading to the development of programmes that provide inclusive and non-discriminatory education and training, health and security systems, to prevent poverty, violence and internal national conflict;

- request to promote women's economic independence, including employment, and eradicate the persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women by addressing the structural causes of poverty through changes in economic systems, ensuring access for all women, including those in rural areas, as vital development agents, to productive resources, opportunities and public services;

- urge to provide women with equitable access to investment and development so that they can develop new dimensions of leadership in business and employment;

- state that the Millennium Development Goals will remain hollow words if development policies do not shift from "gender blind" to "gender responsive";

- call on governments to re-establish the Millennium Development Goals as the core objective of National Action Plans and international development policy and underline that gender should become the "default" mechanism for donors, governments and communities in reaching the MDGs;

- urge the richest countries to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of GDP for official development assistance (ODA) if the poorest countries draw up their anti-poverty programmes to open up trade and investment and tackle corruption.

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NG0/2

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Distr.: General
20 January 2006

Original: English

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**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels**

## Statement submitted by Associated Country Women of the World, Association for the Study of the World Refugee Problem, Center for Women, the Earth, the Divine, European Union of Women, International Association for Counseling, International Council of Jewish Women, International Council of Women, International Federation for Home Economics, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, International Federation of University Women, International Inner Wheel, National Council of German Women's Organizations, Servas International, Socialist International Women, Soroptimist International, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association of Thailand, Salvation Army, Third World Movement against the Exploitation of Women, Women's Federation for World Peace International, Women's International Zionist Organization and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21687 (E) 060206

## Statement

We, the undersigned international and national non-governmental organisations in consultative status with ECOSOC, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, present to the 50th session of CSW the statement below for information and consideration.

The empowerment and autonomy of women are essential for achieving a society in which women and men are equal. Such empowerment must permeate political, economic and cultural structures at all levels. Although women have proven their capabilities as decision-makers in public life, they continue to be under-represented on most levels of governments and in legislative bodies. Some countries have even seen an alarming and significant decrease in the number of women in legislative bodies.

Women's and men's equal participation in political life is instrumental in enhancing the position of women in society as a whole. It is a precondition not only to ensuring that women's interests and contribution are taken into account by governments and society but also to strengthening and making democracy work effectively for the common good.

Socialisation, particularly the stereotyping of women and men reinforce the notion that political decision-making is the domain of men.

Therefore we

• encourage and actively promote alliances among women's organisations in order to coordinate activities and to give support to women in decision-making positions;

Moreover we urge governments

• to encourage networking and co-ordination between women and men at all levels of society and decision-making in both developed and developing countries;

• to promote, when non - existent, the public financing of innovative campaigns, to increase the participation of women in public life;

• to introduce strategies for achieving equality between women and men, which include positive actions such as quota and targets based on gender-segregated data within a specific time frame and establish indicators and benchmarks to allow regular evaluation;

• to implement the dual approach of gender-mainstreaming and positive action in all policies, programmes and budgets, in order to clearly identify their effects on women and men;

• to review the criteria for recruiting and appointing candidates to decision-making bodies to ensure that such criteria do not discriminate against women but promote their full and effective participation.

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/3

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 January 2006

Original: English

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## Statement submitted by Mother's Union, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21744 (E) 060206

## Statement

## Link between gender inequality and uneven development

Since world governments acknowledged that *women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society...are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace*[1], the Millennium Development Goals[2] (MDGs) have become a focus for development efforts. Yet, inequality continues to widen, not only between richer and poorer nations but within them as well. Women, in particular, witness significantly less improvement in their daily lives than men in the same countries. Despite some progress, including reductions in the number of people living in extreme poverty and in the education gender gap,[3] women and girls still do not have equal access to the rights, resources and opportunities that will secure the participation envisaged in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). This results in slow and uneven development and the projected failure of meeting the MDGs.

Hindrances to women's participation that are experienced daily by MU members worldwide include:

### 1. Education

Mothers' Union members know that education empowers women and girls to create change for themselves and their community. They are discouraged that 94 countries have missed the MDG target of gender parity in primary education by 2005 and that world governments did not formally acknowledge this at the UN World Summit in September 2005. Recent figures from UNESCO reveal that 57% of the 100 million children still out of school are girls. School fees continue to be a major barrier to girls attending schools, as well as hidden costs for school equipment and preferences for boys' education over girls'.

Illiteracy amongst adult women is of particular concern to the Mothers' Union. Today, 600 million women are illiterate as compared with 320 million men.[4] Efforts to improve girls' education must be coupled with the improved provision of literacy, numeracy and vocational training for adult women. As the BPfA recognises, equal access to education for women of *all* ages must be of strategic priority.

### 2. Health

Women's health is central to that of any family and community, yet for many Mothers' Union members healthcare is inaccessible, unaffordable and of low quality. Healthcare systems must be responsive to the needs of women, more medical staff must be trained, and more health centres/hospitals must be constructed. National commitments to resourced plans with realistic targets and timetables are needed.

There could be no starker difference between Mothers' Union members than in their experiences of reproductive health. In sub-Saharan Africa, women face a 1 in 16 risk of dying from pregnancy

[1] The Beijing Declaration was endorsed by all UN member states in September 1995
[2] 191 UN member states committed to meeting eight Millennium Development Goals by 2015
[3] Progress of the World's Women 2005 UNIFEM
[4] State of the World Population 2005 UNFPA

related causes, in industrialised countries the risk is 1 in 2,800.[5] If the MDGs to reduce maternal mortality and halt HIV/AIDS are to be met, women must control their own fertility and underlying issues such as poverty, discrimination and violence must be addressed. Governments must ensure universal access to reproductive health by 2015, as promised in 1994[6].

### 3. Work

Women constitute a growing presence in the labour force and hold the central caring role in the family. Yet, Mothers' Union members experience the consistent dismissal of these contributions, by those in their own families or communities and by policy makers. All development policies must reflect the totality of women's work, be it formal or informal, paid or unpaid, to ensure that they benefit women and men.

Women's economic rights such as the right to own and inherit property and to have equal access to assets and resources, including land, credit and technology, are vital. The Mothers' Union was encouraged that world governments recommitted in 2005[7] to guaranteeing these rights and looks forward to their realisation.

## An Enabling Environment for the Advancement of Women

Education, health and work are three areas where gender equality accelerates development for which social transformation, backed by enforceable laws and sufficient resources, is vital. To this end, the Mothers' Union promotes four principles:

### 1. A Holistic Environment

All development efforts, including interconnected issues such as peace, security and human rights, must address gender inequality and be aligned with the BPfA. Responding to criticism that the MDGs reduce the scope of gender equality, the 49th Commission on the Status of Women declared that *'the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals'*. This was further recognised at the UN World Summit. Yet more must be done to address gender concerns: from national plans of action to meet the MDGs, to international mechanisms and instruments, such as the WTO and the UN Peace Building Commission.

Issues of gender equality are central to the Mothers' Union Literacy and Development Programme (MULDP). For example, literacy circles construct pie charts showing the number of hours women work each day compared with men. Participants are able to explore and evaluate the expectations around gendered roles in the home and community, and the possible solutions to the challenges thrown up by this exercise.

[5] State of the World Population 2005 UNFPA
[6] International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, 1994
[7] UN World Summit, September 2005

## 2. An Empowering Environment

The MDGs depict women as passive 'tools' for development, for example as the 'pregnant mother', or the 'illiterate girl child'. However, the advancement of women requires a shift in this perception from mere recipients to promoters of change. It is about ensuring that marginalised voices are heard and acted upon. Only when all women are empowered to claim their rights will governments and policy makers be held to account for delivering their promises made at national or international levels.

The above issues of education, health and work are relevant here and strengthen women's capacities to realise their rights. However, other key factors are regularly overlooked, such as the right to be free from the fear of violence and conflict. The recent UN World Summit recognised this and committed to eliminating all forms of violence against women, but the Mothers' Union stresses that words alone will not achieve this end, resources, laws and political will are essential.

The MULDP empowers women and communities to work together with their newfound skills and confidence to bring change to their lives. Annonciata from Burundi explained it thus: *"Now we shall sensitise others about the improved status of women. Women can now express their ideas and know their rights. We can participate in development. Widows can't be made homeless now."*

## 3. A Partnership Environment

Government-to-government partnership is central to development, although many current policies do not reflect the principles of equality implicit in the idea of 'partnership'. However, governments alone cannot achieve gender equality, they must work with NGOs, faith groups, civil society and the private sector too. Governments must not overlook the positive impact that such partnerships can have in local communities. Such stakeholders not only need resources, but also increased access to UN, national and local government processes, such as the implementation and monitoring of the MDGs. It is essential that women participate just as much as men, not simply from outside political processes but from within as well.

Partnership is crucial when an aspect of women's rights is perceived as clashing with religion or culture. It is only when questions about certain cultural practises (such as female genital mutilation, the use of condoms or sexual rights) come from within a cultural lens that these tensions can be addressed and the association of women's rights with westernisation can be overcome. The Mothers' Union is aware that issues around gender equality continue to challenge the Anglican Communion and is keen to cultivate culturally sensitive dialogue on women's rights at all levels.

All Mothers' Union initiatives are led by members from local communities who have the necessary cultural understanding. For example, the Mothers' Union in Kitale, northern Kenya, runs a Female Genital Mutilation Education Programme, working to separate myth from reality.

## 4. An Inclusive Environment

Gender disparities hit women and girls the hardest, but all of society suffers. Initiatives must target women but should actively include men, necessary allies for change. Gender equality must not be sidelined as a 'women's' issue. Men must be empowered to be advocates of gender equality. This

includes a reassessment of male roles in the community, workplace and home in relation to female roles. This process is enhanced when women's needs and interests are not seen as one homogenous block of needs competing with men's. Gender inequality may, in fact, only be one of a number of intersecting differences, such as disability or ethnicity.

The MULDP includes both men and women. For Elizabeth from Malawi, this made a large difference to her husband's attitude towards the programme, her involvement in it and her role in the community: *"Before, my husband wouldn't let me join the programme. Now he sees what I can do and how it is helping us, it is him who reminds me to come to the sessions."*

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/4

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 January 2006

Original: English

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## Statement submitted by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21726 (E) 060206

## Statement

The two major themes on the agenda of 50th session of the Commission on the Status of Women are of paramount importance to the Sorority in its role as a non-governmental organization dedicated to empowering communities through committed service.

Theme One: Enhanced participation of women in development, an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work.

Recognizing that social action is personal, local and global, Delta's National Social Action Commission works collectively with the Sorority's national officers, regional and local membership, and coalition partners, to promote leadership, advocacy and empowerment to effect social change and public policy, resulting in improved well-being of individuals and families, especially African Americans and women.

The Sorority provides assistance worldwide through programs in local communities based upon its Five Point Thrust:

- Economic Development
- Educational Development
- International Awareness and Involvement
- Physical and Mental Health
- Political Awareness and Involvement

The Dr. Betty Shabazz Delta Academy was created, recognizing that bold action was needed to save young females (ages 11-14) from the perils of academic failure, and low self-esteem. The program enhances the education they receive in public schools across the United States of America. It was expanded to "catch the dreams" of African American at-risk girls (ages 14-18). Delta GEMS provides the framework to actualize those dreams, and tools for achieving academic success.

Nothing is more precious than the gift of life, nor more miraculous than childbirth. Prenatal care and safe birth deliveries are practices often taken for granted in the United States. Yet, adequate prenatal and maternity care is often not experienced by women in our ancestral homeland of Africa. Recognizing this critical health issue, Delta has supported safe birthing through contributions to the Mary Help of the Sick Mission Hospital in Kenya (formerly Thika Maternity Hospital) and by supporting the WHO Maama kit program.

In April 2006, on the island of Jamaica, it will hold an International Summit on Health Issues Impacting Women of African Descent."

Theme Two: Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels

Equal access of men and women to power, decision-making and leadership is a vital precondition for proper functioning of democracy. Yet, traditionally, women have been excluded.

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men. The Sorority works collaboratively with women's and human rights organizations to urge the United States Congress to ratify the CEDAW Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Sorority continues its collaboration with like-minded non-governmental organizations on strategies that advance women's leadership and promote appropriate linkages between the gender equality goals established in Beijing and the Millennium Development Goals.

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/5

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
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Original: English

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## Statement submitted by Soroptomist International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21706 (E) 060206

## Statement

## Women and girls in development: freedom from violence

Soroptimist International believes that violence of any kind is intolerable. In particular, Soroptimist International condemns the use and/or threat of all violence against women in the home, at work, in the community or in war. Acts of violence endanger women physically, mentally, emotionally and economically; perpetuating and reinforcing unjustifiable inequalities in all aspects of women's lives.

Soroptimist International supports the strategic objectives stated in the Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and reconfirmed at the 2005 Commission on the Status of Women and the Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Furthermore, Soroptimist International argues that achievement of gender equality and the Millennium Development Goals is difficult without ending all forms of violence against women and girls. Soroptimist International urges governments to do their utmost to secure the safety of girls and women from acts of violence and to help them overcome the consequences when violence does occur, and to:

- Ensure that law enforcement has adequate resources and training to respond to violence against women and girls; responds quickly to incidents of violence with compassion, understanding and respect; and patrols public places and streets.
- Provide timely and effective resources and support services to victims of violence including safe shelter; access to legal services; and medical and psychological treatment without cost to the victim.
- Provide special services to migrant, disabled and indigenous victims of violence. For example, translation services or disabled access to shelters.
- Inform women and the public at large about the legal rights of women and victims and sources of help.

Soroptimist International also urges Governments to take further action designed to overcome the possibility of and/or the effects of violence by:

- Protecting women from violence and exploitation in their home, community and the workplace.
- Ensuring the safety of those using public transportation.
- Promoting penal systems that protect citizens from violence and punish perpetrators
- Offering services to educate and counsel perpetrators
- Introducing and enforcing legislation making religious and traditional practices which harm women and girls illegal, including female genital mutilation, crimes of honour, bride burning, underage marriages and forced abortion
- Ensuring that women in prison or other institutions are afforded their human rights, protected from violence and treated with dignity and respect.
- Providing rehabilitation for victims of violence including training and job finding when appropriate
- Creating or strengthening the mechanisms for women and girls to report acts of violence in a safe and confidential environment
- Supporting gender specific research into the causes and best practices in addressing violent behavior; disseminating the results and acting on the recommendations
- Developing education programs for young people to teach about gender equality, non-violent conflict resolution and healthy relationships
- Raising awareness about and legislating for the media to promote non-stereotyped images of women and men and eliminate programming that sexualizes girls and promotes violence against women.
- Including women who have suffered from violence in all program development and implementation.

Soroptimist International works to prevent and reduce violence against women and to help the victims, and advocates co-operation among governments, non-governmental and voluntary organizations in this work.

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/6

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Distr.: General
23 January 2006

Original: English

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**Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work**

**Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels**

## Statement submitted by Fédération européenne des femmes actives au foyer, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21894 (E) 060206

**Subject: Enhanced participation of women in development and decision making**
**Full inclusion of unpaid caregivers in development and decision making at all levels**

**F.E.F.A.F.**, Fédération Européenne des Femmes au Foyer, the EU umbrella NGO of national and regional associations representing at-home parents and carers, **MMM**, Mouvement Mondial des Mères, **AFEAS**, Association féminine d'éducation et d'action sociale and **PARENTS FORUM®** call on the United Nations and National Governments, respectively, to include unremunerated caregivers explicitly and directly in development and decision making at all levels.

The lack of recognition of the human, economic, educational and social value of women's unremunerated work, including unpaid child care and education, the care of elderly and disabled relatives, housework, the production of food, and voluntary work within the community, is an impediment to women's progress and has serious negative implications for equality between men and women.

Those who undertake unpaid work as their primary occupation are mostly women and are underrepresented in international, national and local decision-making bodies.

F.E.F.A.F., MMM, AFEAS and PARENTS FORUM® ask that statistics be collected on unpaid work and unpaid workers as a priority so that:

1. access to human, economic and social rights based on all work, remunerated or otherwise, is ensured;
2. development includes unpaid caregivers explicitly at all levels; and
3. representation on international, national and local decision-making bodies is made as open to unpaid workers as it is to paid workers.

There can be no clear planning or cost-benefit analysis for the care of children, elderly and disabled without **reliable data** on **all types** of care: community-based care, institutional care **AND** unremunerated family-based work carried out within the family.

*Therefore F.E.F.A.F., MMM, AFEAS AND PARENTS FORUM® request*
***the implementation of § 11 and 14 (CEDAW) and 165g, 206 (f, g, o, p) and 209 (PfA Beijing)***

- *specifically referring to the collection of data on*
  - *the economic value of unremunerated family-based work for the benefit of dependent individuals*
  - *the impact of national and community policies on the basic unit of the family and all its members, notably in the domain of the elimination of discrimination, the struggle against domestic violence, the risk of poverty of female heads of households, and pensions policies for unremunerated parents and carers*
- *methods of data collection on unremunerated work should be internationalised and include:*
  - *headings in the census and all relevant statistics, including the UN Census 2010 (population and housing) round, for unremunerated work and workers, unremunerated agricultural and food production; unremunerated childcare, eldercare and care of the disabled; unremunerated community and NGO support work*
  - *parallel GDP accounts for unremunerated agricultural, family caring and voluntary work*
  - *gender- and age-disaggregated information on unremunerated workers*
- *the recognition of unremunerated work as an emerging issue from the Beijing PfA process*

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/7

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Distr.: General
23 January 2006

Original: English

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## Statement submitted by Widows Rights International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21900 (E) 060206

Widows Rights International (WRI) was founded in 1996 and works with widows in ten countries in Asia and Africa. Working with women in proactive projects for widows gives WRI a unique understanding of the strengths of widows and their contributions to social cohesion, and post conflict regeneration in addition to their suffering as a result of discrimination.

The thematic issues at the 50th CSW will focus on the promotion of gender equality in development and in the decision making processes, but they do not encompass the specificity of the situation which **WIDOWHOOD** uniquely imposes on women in many countries in the developing world.

Ten years after Beijing, the plight of widows worldwide is now being increasingly recognised, but more as victims of wars and the HIV- AIDS pandemic, rather than as victims of age-old discrimination. The Beijing Platform for Action and other human rights instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), are excellent tools for challenging the discrimination that women and girls suffer, and for providing an enabling environment to bring about gender equality and the advancement of women, but the very specific discrimination that only widows, whether young or old, suffer are often ignored.

The numbers of widows worldwide are rising, as the human toll in conflict afflicted areas continues to increase. The UN has detailed the effect that conflicts – particularly those within states –have on women and children. In his 2002 report to the Security Council : Women Peace and Security, the Secretary General stated that, where cultures of violence and discrimination against women exist prior to conflict, they will be exacerbated during conflict. He added that women and children are disproportionately targeted in contemporary armed conflicts and constitute the majority of all victims. What remained unsaid however was the fact that as a result of such targeting, widows now constitute a disproportionate percentage of these victims of conflict.

The rise in the numbers of conflicts around the world, and the HIV-Aids epidemic, have greatly increased the numbers of widows, including many who are young and the mothers of young children. In addition, the customary treatment of widows in many countries includes common abuse and denies widows the opportunity to contribute to the social and economic development of their families and communities.

Despite efforts at the international level to raise awareness of the issues facing widows, the situation at the national level in many countries continues to condone many customs surrounding widowhood, most of which are psychologically harmful and life-threatening. These deep-rooted customs, include mourning and burial rites, lack of rights to inheritance, land ownership, and custody of children, forced remarriage to close kin of their dead spouses, or a prohibition on remarrying at all.

There is also compelling evidence from many countries that the majority of widows are forced to lead lives of extreme poverty and marginalization, often exposed to abuse and the economic exploitation of their families. Even when laws exist to prevent the abuse of widows, ignorance of the law or cultural habits, impede access to or implementation of legal remedies.

Widows Rights International , a non-governmental organization based in London, is now concentrating its efforts to support national groups working in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, to change attitudes, policies, and laws at local level as well as to enable them to form national and regional networks to bring about change.

It has now become very clear that in order to make a strong case for widows rights as against women's human rights more detailed information is needed on the numbers, ages, and the practices which lead so many of them into lives of unrelieved misery. These practices impact on the following generation as their children are withdrawn from schools, and forced into dangerous life-threatening livelihood options, such as prostitution and beggary.

WRI continues to develop a network of researchers on these matters and we call on States Parties and civil society to collaborate in order to provide data on widows and their children. Hitherto policy makers at the national level have proved unwilling to introduce measures in support of change without reliable qualitative and quantitative data and we call on States Parties to introduce or implement legislation to provide such data.

WRI also calls on all States Parties, the Commonwealth, NGOs, and UN agencies , to use this forum which the Commission on the Status of Women provides, to acknowledge that the human rights of widows is an integral but specific aspect of women's rights generally . WRI supports the campaigns being waged by many NGOs to eradicate this gross infringement of the human rights of a particular section of the world's population, in order to enable them to play a role in the development of their societies and their countries. In addition WRI will continue its own campaigns in this field.

We invite this Commission on the Status of Women in its fiftieth session to give priority to the compilation of reliable data on the customs which infringe the human rights of widows, and of statistics on the numbers of widows worldwide. We also urge the Commission that it should include the link between the poverty of children and the lack of widows' human rights as one of the themes for the following quinquennium.

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/8

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 January 2006

Original: English

**Commission on the Status of Women**
**Fiftieth session**
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 (c)(i) and (ii) of the provisional agenda*
**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives:**

**Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work**

**Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels**

## Statement submitted by National Alliance of Women's Organisations, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21906 (E) 060206

## Statement

NAWO, the National Alliance of Women's Organisations, is an umbrella providing representation and support for women's organisations whose headquarters are in England, and for individual supporters. NAWO seeks an end to gender inequality, and the establishment of social justice based on internationally agreed human rights instruments for all women, with a special focus on gender and Europe. NAWO works with sister organisations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in the UK Joint Committee on Women, which is the United Kingdom national co-ordination for the European Women's Lobby where it represents the concerns and needs of all UK women.

In this, the 50th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, the theme, "Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels", needs to be addressed urgently especially in fields where women are notoriously absent or under-represented.

NAWO is particularly concerned that this is recognised and rectified in the field of trade negotiations. It is vital in all matters to do with global trade that women should participate at all levels of policy development, implementation and decision-making as experts at the highest levels on the board of governing international institutions such as the World Trade Organisation, and at factory, market and community levels.

The under-representation of women as economists or other experts on international trade regulatory bodies both within the UN and on other bodies is a reflection of continuing inequality between women and men and of women's lower status within societies globally.

In particular, there is dangerous and "systematic undervaluing and marginalisation of work in the home and community. Women, in bearing (for the most part unpaid), the main responsibility for both biological and 'social reproduction', that is activity that maintains the labour force, the family and the community, provide an input into both the private and the public sectors without which the multilateral trading system could not exist".[1] It is clear that countries would be unable to sustain any economic development without the bedrock of support that women maintain by providing this unpaid activity.

"Furthermore, women, the family and the community bear the brunt, and take up the slack, when new trade rules disrupt existing patterns and adjustment is needed. Both free market economics and trade policy analysis obscure these facts"[2]; there is a gulf between the operation of the market and the social context in which it exists. Whilst it is the case that the world is in a state of constant change which disrupts society and consequently forces a re-evaluation of social structures, we cannot loose sight of the standards of equality universally proclaimed as necessary though largely implemented only in part.

Despite efforts to ensure especially the least developed economies are afforded time to adjust to market demands and to make changes to protect food security and develop necessary infrastructures, and governments everywhere could do more to afford social protection (for example with the implementation of core labour standards), too often the global agenda has harmed and is harming local populations. In particular, there is wholly inadequate recognition of women's unequal and different life patterns which are detrimentally affected by rapid liberalisation of trade.

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[1] Gender Expert Group on Trade [GEGT] (2004) Position Paper, Women's National Commission, DTI, London, UK
[2] GEGT, as above

New industries bring different benefits and dangers and there is no overall equally good or bad outcome in different countries. It is important to note the complexity of the processes involved, but, among some of the reported outcomes, for example, of women leaving villages to work many miles away in free export areas for low wages with few women in senior or management positions, is the increased vulnerability of women evinced through:

- little possibility for the development of family lives and the sustaining of existing or forming of new families;
- exhaustion and health problems from long hours and poor working conditions;
- little possibility of reaching home regularly to support children or other village/community members in the work of food or other local production.
- sexual harassment, rape and the spread of HIV/AIDS and other venereal diseases;
- unwanted pregnancies with poor health service availability.

Trade liberalisation occurs with little in the way of assessment of the likely impact on workers or consumers and especially not of its differential impact on women and men, boys and girls. This too is in part due to the relative absence of women in decision-making who might ask the right questions as well as providing some of the solutions.

NAWO calls on the United Nations system in and through all its bodies and agencies to assist with technical expertise in ensuring disaggregated statistics are collected to enable gender impact assessment in trade liberalisation and to undertake such gender impact assessment. Information gained in this way must be made available to governments so that steps may be taken and aid provided to mitigate detrimental impacts.

NAWO further calls on governments – both from north and south – to encourage girls in formal education to pursue non-traditionally female topics (mathematics, economics for example), to train both women and men so that they understand the gendered nature of trade liberalisation (especially important for officials in regulatory bodies), to ensure equal numbers of women are educated to leadership, with the skills necessary for negotiation and conflict resolution, so that they may be elected and appointed to political and business positions of authority and power where their influence will be felt in challenging unfettered trade liberalisation.

NAWO further calls on the United Nations within its own system and on Governments - in particular, European governments - to require these public and private bodies to appoint qualified women at Board and other senior levels, using quotas or other specific incentives and sanctions, in order to achieve gender balance (40% minimum women, 40% minimum men and no more than 60% of either sex) thus increasing democratic decision-making.

Poverty and distress is too often the result of trade liberalisation and NAWO calls on States Parties, the UN and civil society to work together towards the goal of trade processes that ensure trade liberalisation affords both women and men enhanced lives, increased prosperity and greater opportunities.

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/9

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 January 2006

Original: English

**Commission on the Status of Women**
**Fiftieth session**
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 (c) (ii) of the provisional agenda*
**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels**

## Statement submitted by Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21834 (E) 060206

## Statement

1. The Northern Ireland Women's European Platform is an umbrella organisation with over 50 organisations from voluntary and community groups, trade unions, statutory organisations faith groups which aims to ensure that the voice of women in Northern Ireland contribute to the debates on women's concerns at local, regional, national, European and international levels. We welcome the opportunity offered by CSW for governments and NGOs to discuss in relation to the thematic issues *Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels*.

2. Women universally are prime carers in families and communities and they have a huge interest in community stability, so they play important roles in peace-building in unofficial ways. Women in Northern Ireland have bridged divides across traditional religious and cultural divisions.

3. Although the number of women involved in the Northern Ireland negotiations that led to the Belfast Agreement was relatively small, the quality of their contribution was valuable and significant. The role of women in any peace process should be considered in its broadest sense by including community-based women and women from other areas of public and political life, but in Northern Ireland, as in other post conflict societies, this inclusion must be sustained if the commitment to the Belfast Agreement to ensure 'equal opportunity in all social and economic activity' is to be delivered.

4. There is a lack of will among member states not to ensure women's participation in decision making during peace negotiations as a priority. But to include women in political decision-making in post conflict societies is to take seriously gender justice, gender equality, women's human rights and the rebuilding of relationships because:

    - women and men are affected by conflict and therefore are affected by the consequences of peace agreements These agreements are not merely about ending war, they are also about establishing the conditions for new just societies where plural perspectives are taken into account
    - women's inclusion in all stages of peace processes is essential for inclusive social justice
    - women in political, policy and legal decision-making contexts often makes a difference to the sorts of issues addressed like education, health, nutrition, childcare and human security needs in places

5. Establishing that women need to be integral to any peace building which is recognised by the UN Security Council in the Resolution 1325 and the European Resolution on the participation of women in peaceful conflict resolution is only part of the process - involvement in political, economic and social leadership structures is essential and where women are clearly underrepresented if peace to be sustained.

**We urge member states to recognise the need for women in decision-making and leadership roles in peace building and to consider the following recommendations:**

1. To ensure that at least 40% of women are included in all reconciliation, peacekeeping, peace-enforcement, peace-building and conflict prevention posts
2. To identify and modify processes which may hinder a women from applying for a position in decision-making
3. To identify and provide mechanisms to enable women to access decision-making positions through training, gender action plans, and incentives

4. To support non-governmental organisations and research institutes to research women's participation in the area of foreign policy at national and international levels, and
5. To ensure that local peace building initiatives are fostered and supported by government.

**Women and Decision-making in Northern Ireland since the Peace Process:-**

Political - of the 108 members elected to the Northern Ireland Assembly 17 are women

no elected political parties has a women as leader

Policing – although positive action to increase recruitment of women the current female representation is 16.47% given that 37% (source 2005) of applications received were from women, the priority remains focused on religious monitoring rather than gender

the Policing Board has 19 members of whom only two are women

Judicial - no women high court judges

Monitoring – no women selected on the Independent Monitoring Board to monitor paramilitary activity
Public Bodies - 34% of women in public bodies, but mainly in health and education

**Positive steps forward in gender equality**

- Female Police Ombudsman
- 3 out of seven women were elected to the Parades Commission (last Parades Commission had no women)

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/10

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 January 2006

Original: English

**Commission on the Status of Women**
**Fiftieth session**
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 (c) (i) of the provisional agenda*
**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work**

## Statement submitted by Congregations of St. Joseph, International Alliance of Women, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Grail, International Council of Jewish Women, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International Federation of Women Lawyers, International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation, Mouvement pour l'abolition de la prostitution et de la pornographie et de toutes formes de violences sexuelles et discriminations sexistes, School Sisters of Notre Dame and UNANIMA International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21840 (E) 070206

## Statement

We, NGOs working toward the realization of gender equality, affirm the need for full participation of women in development. To attain this goal, we believe it is critical to recognize that sexual violence and exploitation are a very significant barrier to achieving gender equality and development.

In particular, male violence against women and girls is antithetical to the establishment of an enabling environment for achieving gender equality. One of the most severe, devastating, and escalating practices of gender-based violence is the commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls, including prostitution, sex trafficking, the Internet bride industry, pornography, and sex tourism. The advancement of women in the fields of education, health and work is severely hindered by the proliferation of trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Working toward the elimination of these forms of violence against women is essential to giving women equal opportunity to participate in development.

### The impact of trafficking and prostitution on the advancement of women

Reports of UNICEF indicate that as many as half of trafficking victims are children. Girls are the majority of the approximately one million children who enter the sex industry each year. Their education is disrupted when they are trafficked into prostitution and forced early marriages. Without access to school, girls fail to develop their potential, often perpetuating their sexual exploitation into adulthood. Without the knowledge and training available to other youth, prostituted women and girls have limited ability to benefit from and contribute to their community's development.

The negative impact of sex trafficking on the health and human rights of women around the world is enormous. Sexual violence is one of the leading factors of the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls. UNAIDS, UNFPA, and UNIFEM have identified gender inequality as the core cause of the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls, citing their inability to exercise control over their bodies and their lives. Further, a survey of 854 people in prostitution in nine countries (Canada, Colombia, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, United States, and Zambia) revealed that 71% experienced physical assaults in prostitution, and 62% reported rapes in prostitution. *See* Melissa Farley, *Prostitution in nine countries: Update on violence and posttraumatic stress disorder* (2003). Trafficked and prostituted women and girls have little redress against the abuse, violence, harassment and debasement to which they are subjected. Victims of prostitution often suffer severe health consequences ranging from injuries inflicted by beatings, rapes, and unwanted sex; psychological devastation, including trauma, depression, and suicide; HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; and alcohol and drug abuse induced by pimps or by women's attempts to self-medicate. Women and girls suffering from these severe and often long-term health problems are hindered in attaining and advancing their human rights.

Traffickers and pimps exploit women and girls seeking to improve their lives through employment by reducing them to commodities to be bought and sold. Traffickers, pimps, and buyers degrade their humanity. Men purchase the right to insult, slap, and rape women and girls. These acts, which include forms of sexual violence that women's and human rights groups have long sought to eliminate from women's beds, homes, workplaces and streets, are part of the "job" in the sex industry. Over the past decade, economic policies often have led to prioritizing profit at the expense of human rights and gender equality. Rather than recognizing women's skills and contributions to society, governments have adopted development policies effectively normalizing and, in some places, even legalizing sexual violence and exploitation such as prostitution and pornography. Legal legitimatization of prostitution gives men moral and social permission to practice the prostitution of women and girls, which in turn encourages an increase in the demand that fuels sex trafficking. As the demand for prostituted sex increases, so does the risk of sexual exploitation for women and girls seeking opportunities for advancement through work.

### Recommendations

In order to create an enabling environment for women and girls and to advance gender equality, governments and civil society must take action to eradicate violence against women, particularly sexual violence and exploitation in the sex industry. We urge policy and action in the following areas:

- Implementation of preventative measures such as public education campaigns which describe the risks of trafficking, prostitution, and related forms of sexual exploitation to potential victims, and which challenge the attitudes and practices of potential perpetrators that result in sexual exploitation;

- Educational curricula in the lower grades that raise awareness about the harm of gender stereotypes and sexual objectification of women and girls and that promote gender inequality in relationships;

- Elimination by governments of structural factors that push women into trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation such as poverty, systematic violence against women, gender discrimination, and other forms of discrimination such as racism;

- Increased support and services for survivors of trafficking and prostitution;

- Promotion of effective laws against trafficking, prostitution, and related forms of sexual exploitation, including provisions criminalizing the demand for trafficking and prostitution;

- Development of training programs for government bodies such as law enforcement to hold perpetrators, including traffickers, pimps, and buyers, accountable rather than criminalizing victims;

- Strong and effective prosecution of perpetrators of violence against women, including buyers and sellers of women and girls in prostitution and related practices of sexual exploitation;

- Rejection of government policies promoting prostitution, whether through legalization or decriminalization of the sex industry;

- Ratification and implementation of the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (the "1949 Convention"); the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women ("CEDAW"); the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Given the severe and often long-term effects of sex trafficking and prostitution on women's and girls' education, health and work, governments and civil society must implement policies recognizing that commercial sexual exploitation impedes women's attainment of gender equality and full participation in society. An environment which would enable women's equality and participation in development is one which identifies the harms of commercial sexual exploitation and works to eradicate it.

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/11

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 January 2006

Original: English

**Commission on the Status of Women**
**Fiftieth session**
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 (c) (i) and (ii) of the provisional agenda*

**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives:**

**Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work**

**Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels**

## Statement submitted by World Vision International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21846 (E) 070206

## Statement

World Vision welcomes the 2006 Commission on the Status of Women's focus on the enhanced participation of women in development. We share the goal of creating an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and for the advancement of women by addressing education, health, work, and violence. World Vision works in nearly 100 nations to advance all people, with the conscious intention of empowering women and girls through that process. Concrete actions must be taken in response to women and girls' physical, spiritual, and psychosocial needs, ensuring that all people are fully included and can actively design and participate in development policies and practices, regardless of age, gender, disability, health status, ethnicity, or other characteristics.[1] To achieve these outcomes World Vision recognises men and boys must be an integral part of the solution and that women and girls must participate in decision-making at every level: within the family, community, and society.

### Education

The Millennium Development Goal of eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education is recognised by the UN and development community as essential to women's participation in development and the eradication of poverty. High illiteracy rates among women, especially at the community level, prevent them from equal participation in development. Girl child education and school attendance trails behind boys' in nearly every developing nation.[2] More must be done to influence parents and encourage girls to continue their education. Early marriage is a harmful practice that affects girls' psychosocial and physical health, their future children's development, and usually causes them to drop out of school. There is a great need to educate men and boys on the harms of early marriage and to involve community and religious leaders, as well as government officials, to ensure women and girls' rights, and the enforcement of marriage and family laws.

***World Vision recommends:***

1. Remove all restrictions to educating girls and women, including school fees, discriminatory attitudes, and lack of safety and transportation.
2. Increase funding for school buildings, girls' toilets, female teachers, teacher training, transportation, and parental cash incentives, to ensure accessible and quality primary and secondary education.
3. Pursue public education and awareness programmes that promote opportunities available for girls (including disabled girls) in learning and careers and the benefits of education, empowering parents and combating the attitude that girls are not worth educating.
4. Include discussions of child protection, domestic violence, and gender roles and equality in all school curricula, and build the capacity of teachers to counteract gender discrimination.
5. Promote programs that address the negative effects associated with issues of dowry and early marriage, and train teachers in appropriate responses to protect girls from early marriage.
6. Address the educational rights of teenage mothers through providing non-formal education opportunities, including literacy, parenting and vocational training.

### Health

Poor health and inadequate health care prevent women and their children from participating in development. The AIDS pandemic continues to destroy the lives of women and girls across the world and undermine the development of their communities and societies. Young women are the fastest growing newly infected group because of their lack of social power. World Vision considers the elimination of harmful gender roles and the empowerment of women and girls

[1] This definition of "inclusive development" is taken from the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC), of which World Vision is a member.

[2] UNICEF, *State of the World's Children*, 2004.

essential elements in the fight to stop the spread of AIDS, and invests considerable resources and expertise in this fight in the most affected countries.

***World Vision recommends:***

7. Raise public awareness of the special health and nutritional needs of adolescent girls, women of childbearing age, elderly, and disabled women.
8. Governments must increase their budgetary allocation to improve health standards for women, ensuring the adequate and regular supply of medicine, materials and personnel trained in the needs of normally and differently abled women, at all health care centres and hospitals of all levels.
9. Facilitate the social, political, and economic empowerment of women so they are in a stronger position to negotiate with partners and protect themselves from HIV.
10. Work through schools, faith-based organisations, and community institutions to ensure access to sound health information; sensitise men and women to the rights and responsibilities of each; and combat the stigma, denial, and discrimination surrounding women and men, girls and boys affected by HIV/AIDS.
11. Work with community leaders, parents, and men to end harmful practices – both traditional and recent – such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, and wife inheritance, which increase gender-based vulnerability to HIV infection and cause other damage to women.
12. Make additional support available for research and distribution of female-controlled HIV prevention methods.

## Work

Full access to the workforce and recognition of women's contribution are essential to women's participation in development and the alleviation of poverty. Governments should ensure the exercise of equal economic rights for women and the removal of discriminatory practices. Such actions will aid women's effective involvement in power structures and decision-making positions.

***World Vision recommends:***

13. Create programmes and raise awareness among men and women to acknowledge and alleviate the burdens of women's triple role in their home, workplace, and community, and promote women's equal participation in decision-making.
14. Enhance the social support system to enable women to work outside of the home by providing free/subsidised and good quality day-care centres for infants and elders.
15. Governmental and international agencies, NGOs, employers, and trade unions must ensure equal rights and equal pay for all women.
16. Uphold women's property rights and create programs to prevent widespread migration of women and girls from rural areas toward urban centres, where they are exploited as labour providers.
17. Women in leadership must be encouraged to build their capacity, confidence, assertiveness, and leadership skills while increasing the number of female staff who serve as role models. At the same time, men must be made aware of the shared benefits of gender equality, enabling them to relate to and work positively with empowered women.

## Violence

World Vision calls special attention to the urgent issue of gender-based violence. Violence against women is a violation of human rights that prevents women from participating in development through the deterioration of all aspects of health, precluding access to education, and restricting women from the ability to work securely. Physical, psychological and sexual violence persist as problems that plague every community. Domestic violence is an especially insidious and often hidden form that is tolerated and ignored by governments and law enforcement because it is assumed to be a private matter. Because of their vulnerability and invisibility, disabled women and girls are most likely to face sexual abuse. Armed conflict exposes all people to violence, maiming and death, yet women and girls are put in particular danger of sexual violence because of their gender. Changing the way people think is central to addressing gender-based

violence and World Vision acknowledges that policies and laws will have little effect unless there is community understanding and support.

***World Vision recommends***:

18. Provide proper procedures, communication strategies, materials, and expertise to investigate rape and other sexual assault cases, and to detect and report cases of violence against women without undermining the security of those who report such cases.
19. Actively address the issue of gender-based violence, and provide funding and advocacy for creating and maintaining statutory laws that will provide a recourse under the law for women and girls.
20. Political, religious, and community leaders, men's groups, and media should play a vital role in encouraging citizens to speak out, accept their responsibilities and take positive steps to prevent domestic violence in their neighbourhoods and society.
21. Governments in conflict and disaster situations must meet women and girls' right to protection, determine feasible mechanisms and enforcement measures, and implement polices to address violations.
22. The international community must support responsive gender-based disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes, with separate facilities for women and girls.
23. Develop a comprehensive approach to child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation that addresses the core elements of the '3 Ps': prevention, protection, and prosecution.

After many decades of working towards women's empowerment, following through on promises and plans at the local, national, regional, and global levels remains a significant obstacle to the advancement of women. It is a challenge to hold governments accountable and put power behind ambitious documents. Many of the treaties and agreements signed by the states become rather symbolic expressions that, in practice, are translated to neither real improvements of position nor change in the status of women. Therefore, World Vision calls all member states to take seriously their previous commitments to women and girls and foster the conditions that build equal relations and accountability between men and women. To do so, World Vision urges governments to put mechanisms in place to enforce the implementation of their own commitments. Furthermore, World Vision suggests partnership with social institutions such as churches, council of elders, community leaders and other sources of influence to remove barriers that prevent women from full participation.

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/12

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 January 2006

Original: English

**Commission on the Status of Women**
**Fiftieth session**
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 (c) (i) of the provisional agenda*
**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work**

## Statement submitted by the Anglican Consultative Council, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1

06-21852 (E) 060206

**Statement**

## The Anglican Communion and its Faith Perspective

We are 75 million Christians of 165 countries in the Anglican Communion, stretching from the United Kingdom to Southern Africa, from Australia to the Southern Cone, from the United States to the Philippines. More than half of our members are women grieved by the harsh consequences women and children face because of conflict, poverty, violence and the unexpected traumas of natural disasters. This solidarity in suffering is at the heart of our theology, and our commitment to justice and rebuilding is central to our faith.

Our five-fold Marks of Mission, adopted many years ago as basis of the worldwide work of the Anglican Communion are: (i) to proclaim the Good News of God's realm; (ii) to teach, baptize and nurture new believers; (iii) to respond to peoples' needs through loving service; (iv) to break down unjust structures to maintain peace and justice; and, (v) to strive to safeguard the integrity of God's creation and to sustain and renew the earth.

## The UNCSW Themes This Year

1. Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work

As delegates to the UNCSW in 2004 as well as 2005, grassroots Anglican Women returned home to create and foster an enabling environment to address the social justice issues of the Beijing Platform for Action, building global and regional networks, holding conferences and speaking out against the patriarchal environment which perpetuates the feminization of poverty, the AIDS pandemic, the unequal access to quality education and the rampant incidence of violence against women at home and in war.

Within the sisterhood of Anglican women, as with women everywhere, the hope and prayer is that the United Nations, through its Commission on the Status of Women, continues to emphasize these critical issues which have such a dire effect on women. The BPfA and the MDGs must be in the forefront for as long as it takes to achieve the worthy goals which they incorporate. We are convinced that gender equality and the full participation of women will bring about the eradication of poverty and violence.

2. Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels

The network of Anglican women who attended the Commission on the Status of Women last year presented resolutions to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) meeting which took place in Nottingham, England, in June 2005. The resolutions called for:

- affirmation of the work of the International Anglican Women's Network in responding to the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

- acknowledgement of the MDG goal for equal representation of women in decision-making at all levels;
- identification of ways in which this goal could be incorporated into the structures of the ACC and all of its member churches; and,
- establishment of a women's desk in each Province of the ACC.

The resolutions were unanimously adopted, and the work of surveying the current status of women in the Anglican Communion has begun. Delegates to UNCSW 2006 will bring with them the statistics related to the percentages of women on decision-making bodies in their dioceses, their regions and their countries.

A critical examination of the structures by which the Communion measures its unity reveals that women hold a small percentage of the available positions. Clearly there is work to be done. This great disparity in terms of leadership and representation underscores the importance of the UNCSW as a forum for advocacy, sharing and strategy. Currently Anglican women are strategizing to assure that their statistic changes to one more closely resembling the 50 percent goal of this year's CSW theme. We are well aware that we are not alone in this effort and that we will be joining with women of faith everywhere.

## The Mission of Anglican Women

As Anglican women drawn from across the global village, our mission principles compel us to speak and act with confidence and compassion as we create a world in which the lowly are raised up, the hungry are fed, the sick are healed, the innocent are protected and the oppressed are freed. Our work and our voices are an enduring contribution to UNCSW, to our civil governments and to our churches. We are proud to represent our Church, we are privileged to be part of UNCSW and, we are humbled by the opportunity to gather with women of all faith traditions and other Christian denominations. We are committed to the pursuit of gender justice for all women in all faith-based and civil institutions.

Our voices are clear on issues of peace and justice as we call for an end to global poverty, to the AIDS pandemic and to the abuse of women and children anywhere and everywhere. What we bring as women is our determination to continue to work and to pray for unconditional inclusion in all aspects of church life and leadership and an unshakeable faith belief that some day God's justice will prevail for all of God's people throughout the world.

*God of Mercy, God of Love, God of Justice, Creator of the heavens and the earth, we pray your infinite blessings upon all who gather at the United Nations for the 50th anniversary of the Commission on the Status of Women. Help all who gather to see one another through eyes enlivened by compassion and enlightened by understanding. Help all who gather to hear one another with ears attuned to the cries of suffering. Open our hearts and enable our hands to be deliverers of mercy. Amen.*

United Nations E/CN.6/2006/NGO/13

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 January 2006

Original: English

**Commission on the Status of Women**
**Fiftieth session**
27 February-10 March 2006
Item 3 (c) (i) and (ii) of the provisional agenda*
**Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives:**

**Enhanced participation of women in development: an enabling environment for achieving gender equality and the advancement of women, taking into account, inter alia, the fields of education, health and work**

**Equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels**

# Statement submitted by International Union of Psychological Science, SOS Kinderdorf International, International Federation for Home Economics, International Council of Psychologists, Center for Migration Studies of New York, Child Welfare League of America, National Council on Family Relations, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations and Associated Country Women of the World, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2006/1.

06-21858 (E) 060206

## Statement

We commend the Commission on the Status of Women for focusing the 2006 Session on women's achievement of gender equality through an enabling environment and through equal participation of women and men in decision making processes. We firmly believe that the most important precondition for attaining these goals is an enabling environment for women, as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers, within the family, the basic unit of human development.

We urge the Commission to act on the following:

1. Universal educational opportunities for girls and boys;

2. Literacy programs for adults at all ages;

3. Equal access for men, women, and children to quality physical and mental health care, especially for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis;

4. Promotion of gender equality for women in the workforce as well as within the family;

5. Partnership of women and men in decision making within the family and the community;

6. Equal rights for women with regard to marriage, divorce, and property.

We state our trust in the Commission on the Status of Women to work strenuously towards the accomplishment of these goals.